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Defends Committee Action

Rivers Thumps Watson For Comments On CIA

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WASHINGTON — House Armed Services Chairman L. Mendel Rivers suggested Monday that Rep. Albert W. Watson might do well to stick to his own areas of investigation and leave the Central Intelligence Agency to those more familiar with the facts.

"He's a member of the House Unamerican Activities Committee and I'm sure he will have all he can do handling matters that come before it," Rivers observed, "without criticizing the way other committees handle their operations."

The Charleston lawmaker's comment was triggered by a published Watson

charge that the armed services committees had failed to supervise the CIA as closely as they should.

"Maybe Mr. Watson doesn't know quite as much about the CIA as we do," Rivers observed. "If he did, he might not be so glib in his criticism of it and us. They've got a dirty job to do and they're doing it pretty well."

Beyond that, he concluded, "I think our committee is also doing pretty well in handling its job in spite of what Mr. Watson has to say."

Rivers serves as chairman of the House Armed Services Subcommittee specifically charged with CIA oversight.

Last week, after extensive quizzing of CIA Director Richard Helms, that subcommittee endorsed the agency's controversial support of the National Student Association as proper and necessary and a move it contended had done much to prevent a communist takeover of international student organizations.

In connection with that report, Rivers had warned against any wholesale effort to expose CIA activities. Such a move, he said, could well reveal its undercover operations to the extent of destroying its usefulness as an intelligence channel.